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JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2006

#### In Today's Papers

Charges against Safak for "Insulting Turkishness" Dropped  
All papers report an Istanbul court on Thursday dropped charges against author Elif Safak for denigrating Turkish identity" in her latest novel, "The Bastard of Istanbul." The ruling said substantial evidence was lacking. "I'm very happy with the outcome but as long as Article 301 is out there, there will be many other cases like this," Safak said.

Prime Minister Erdogan also welcomed the verdict, signaling that the government would consider amending Article 301 of Turkey's penal code which envisages up to three years in jail for "denigrating Turkish national identity." The European Commission welcomed the decision to acquit Safak, but said Turkish law still threatened free speech. Joost Lagendijk, co-chairman of the Turkey-European Union Joint Parliamentary Commission, said regardless of the outcome, every case filed was a victory for the opponents of the European Union in Turkey.

After the hearing, a small group of protesters condemned Safak, forcing riot police to move in to stop scuffles between nationalists and leftists outside the courthouse.

Writing in the Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak, Mehmet Ocaktan argues that the problem is not Article 301 itself but the nationalists and politicians who enable them to bring charges under the law: "It is a big relief to see Elif Safak's acquittal, but this doesn't guarantee that prosecutors won't file similar cases. If Turkey was a normal democratic country, maybe this article would never be mentioned. Italy has a similar law but, so far, no one has ever been tried because of their opinions under this article. This is mainly because Italians do not have lawyers like Kemal Kerincsiz, the nationalistic lawyer who initiated many such cases and follows the authors and poets around like a detective. Of course, the greatest hurdle on the path to democratization and Article 301 is those politicians who have a Kerincsiz-like mentality. It seems that a

'nationalistic wave' is on the rise in Turkey's politics. Opposition party leaders Baykal and Bahceli are the political partners of Kerincsiz. I believe the first thing to be done is to save Article 301 from the hands of Kerincsiz and his political partners."

#### CHP Blocks Non-Muslim Schools Bill

All papers say changes in a bill regulating education in non-Muslim minority schools have been suspended over complaints of the opposition CHP that the new regulations would be used to pave the way for the reopening of the Halki Seminary. Earlier this week the ruling AK Party government made an attempt to change the definition of "minority schools." Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) officials told Radikal that the regulation had been planned as a good-will gesture for 40,000 Armenians as well as foreign diplomats and businessmen living in Turkey. The government was forced to pull back the motion when CHP lawmakers charged that the bill would pave the way for reopening Halki Seminary in Istanbul. According to current regulations, only minority nationals of Turkey have access to minority schools in Turkey. A decision regarding minority regulations will be made when Foreign Minister Gul returns home after wrapping up talks in the US.

CHP leader Deniz Baykal warned the AKP government to respect the Lausanne Treaty, likening the planned reforms to the concessions demanded in the Treaty of Sevres for dividing Turkey. Radikal slams the opposition for manipulating sensitivity over the Lausanne Treaty in an effort to oppose the reforms planned by the government. Several academics told the press that the Lausanne Treaty did not refer specifically to the Greek, Armenian and Jewish minorities, but to "non-Muslims" in Turkey, stressing that the treaty allowed non-Muslim schools and Halki Seminary.

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#### Al-Qadi Controversy

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Yeni Safak and others: A US diplomat told Sabah on condition of anonymity that Washington had welcomed the Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) decision to appeal against the ruling of the Council of State (Danistay) on Saudi financier Yasin al-Qadi, but was equally disappointed with a later decision to withdraw the appeal. During an upcoming meeting in early October, President Bush will express to Erdogan the US uneasiness with the Danistay decision to scrap a government decree freezing the assets of al-Qadi in Turkey, reminding the PM that the Saudi businessman is on the UN terror list. On Thursday, Ambassador Ross Wilson commented that UN decisions are binding for all members.

#### Gul Meets Rice in New York

All papers report Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, in New York to attend the 61st UN General Assembly meetings, met with Secretary Rice on Thursday to discuss peace in Middle East, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey's EU process. Gul told Rice that Kirkuk was not a "Turkish-Kurdish problem," adding that negative developments in Kirkuk would negatively affect all of Iraq. Papers say Rice made Gul no new promises concerning fighting against the PKK. On Thursday, Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) spokesman Namik Tan said the visits to the US of Turkish farming and state ministers, Mehdi Eker and Kursad Tuzmen, and the appointment of Ralston as the special US envoy for combating terrorism had been concrete moves coming out of the strategic vision document.

#### Editorial Commentary: UN Reforms

Columnist Sami Kohen, writing in the mainstream Milliyet, calls for UN reform: "The structure of the UN is outdated. The organization was established at the end of World War II by 50 countries, including Turkey. Today, the UN has 192 members. In recent years, we have seen several times that the UN has been unable to resolve international disagreements, and end attacks and clashes. In many cases, the organization was even inefficient in extending humanitarian aid. Everyone agrees that the UN needs reforms. However, there is no consensus over the kind of reforms that should be applied to the UN. To put it another way, the UN is unable to unite even to decide its own future. Last year, during the 60th

anniversary of the UN, some basic agreements were reached regarding necessary reforms. Priority should be given to the reforms to answer today's needs, as soon as possible."

TV Highlights  
NTV (8 a.m.)

#### Domestic News

- UNHCR Turkey said Greek coastal security forces had violated international laws and EU norms by leaving illegal immigrants offshore from the Turkish coast, noting that Turkish officials sometimes had been acting in the same way.
- Mehmet Ali Agca, the hitman who attempted to kill Pope John Paul II in 1981, warned Pope Benedict XVI in a letter not to visit Turkey because his life would be at risk.
- Istanbul Mayor Kadir Topbas said car owners might be charged an annual fee of 100 lira for parking their cars on streets.

#### International News

- Iraqi President Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) said Turkish forces situated along the border had been shelling the town of Dohuk in northern Iraq.

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- An opinion poll commissioned by the Bertelsmann Foundation, a German think tank, shows 37 percent of those surveyed across the EU believe Turkey will join the EU in the next 15 years.
- Kosovo parliament has adopted a proposal to make Turkish the official language in the southern municipality of Prizren.
- Authorities found the beheaded body of Turkish engineer Mustafa Asimi who was abducted in Afghanistan last month.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON